

*(The whole issue)*

Featuring:

LEO REISMAN  
STORY

by

PAUL CHAROSH

*See especially p. 6,*

THE MAGAZINE OF RECORD STATISTICS AND INFORMATION



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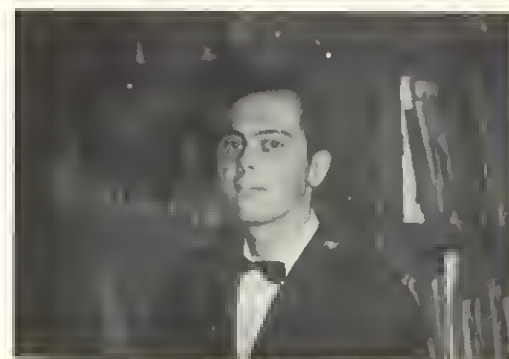
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THE AUTHOR OF THIS COMPILATION

Paul Charosh is a free-lance writer, and Lecturer in the  
 Social Sciences at Brooklyn College. He is a respected  
 source of information on songs dating from the late nine-  
 teenth century to the second world war, and is particular-  
 ly interested in songs as expressions of values and atti-  
 tudes of the times which produced them.

Mr. Charosh's record collection, begun in 1946, contains  
 an excellent representation of all types of material recorded,  
 from the 1890s into the 1930s.

# LEO REISMAN STORY

by  
**PAUL CHAROSH**

One of the most successful musical careers of the century ended on  
 December 18, 1961, with the death of Leo Reisman. Although he was  
 active as a conductor until a few months before his death, he will be  
 remembered best for the music he produced during the 1920s and 1930s,  
 and for his role as maestro at the Hotel Brunswick in Boston, and at the  
 Central Park Casino in New York. Those who were not fortunate  
 enough to hear him in person may remember his radio broadcasts, and  
 anyone who enjoyed dancing may have purchased some of the five-  
 hundred recordings made by his orchestra from the early 1920s through  
 the late 1940s. Although he had led orchestras for nearly forty-five  
 years, Leo Reisman was only 64 years old when he died. Success  
 came to him early, and he held on to it through what were, in popular  
 music, two of the most important decades of this century.

This author spent at least a dozen afternoons with him during the  
 year preceding his death. He received questions about the past with  
 good-humored impatience. His most frequent response to requests for  
 details about earlier years in his career was - "You mean people want  
 to know about THAT?" Nevertheless, he apparently enjoyed the  
 questions, even though he was sometimes unable to supply accurate  
 answers, especially when dates were involved. He would have much  
 preferred to discuss the present and the future. For twenty years of his  
 life he had been one of the most popular and highly paid orchestra  
 leaders in the country. He could not understand why his role should  
 now be different.

He had strong opinions on many subjects, and enjoyed expressing  
 them. They were always interesting. Had he developed other talents  
 and not become a musician, he might have become a writer. Success-  
 ful or not, he would have certainly enjoyed himself.

Leo received a violin on his tenth birthday as a present from his  
 grandfather, and within two years was playing popular hits at the sheet  
 music counter in Houghton and Dutton's Department Store in Boston,  
 for a fee of one dollar. At thirteen, he was billed as "boy soloist" at  
 Keith's Bijou Dream Theatre in Washington Street, Boston. During  
 this engagement he was heard by George W. Chadwick, Director of  
 the New England Conservatory of Music, and invited to become a  
 scholarship pupil. At the Conservatory, he conducted his first profes-  
 sional orchestra, and played at local parties and social affairs.

During the summer of 1916, while conducting a salon orchestra in  
 Bar Harbor, Maine, he was heard by an influential entrepreneur from  
 whom he later received a telegram offering the directorship of the  
 Belvedere Hotel orchestra, in Baltimore. Stokowski heard Leo and  
 recommended him as first violinist for the Baltimore Symphony  
 Orchestra, the schedule of which did not interfere with his engagement  
 at the hotel. He returned to the Conservatory in September 1918, and  
 was hired to lead the salon orchestra at the Lenox Hotel. This engage-  
 ment included Saturday evening dance music stints that began his  
 development as a dance orchestra leader. In 1919 he was engaged to  
 play at the Hotel Brunswick, and began an association which was to  
 last for nearly a decade.

These were the gay years which followed the war, during which,  
 wrote Lucius Beebe some years later in the N. Y. HERALD TRIBUNE:

the Brunswick Hotel in Boston's Boylston Street was one of the  
 Hub's characteristic institutions, a tavern with an atmosphere of  
 its own of rus in urbe, one with the tradition of the Thorndyke and  
 old Parker's in School Street, both of which were still at that time  
 in operation. The Brunswick as a hostelry appealed to New  
 Englanders and country folk. Until recently it had had its own  
 stables, and during the summer there was a rank of rocking chairs  
 along the top of the flight of stone steps that led to its entrance,  
 for all the world like the porches of a hundred Profile and Notch  
 houses in a score of White Mountain resorts. The rockers were in  
 vast demand, and many of the sitters smoked corncob pipes.

Curiously different from this georgic atmosphere, for all its setting  
 amid the clanging traffic of Copley Square, was the Brunswick's  
 Egyptian Room, a dance pavilion decorated in a vaguely Karnak  
 manner with Theban overtones, approximating in archeologic  
 veracity, say, the Metropolitan Opera's setting for "Aida". Here  
 the gilded youth of what F. Scott Fitzgerald was pleased to call  
 the era of the great tea dance foregathered of a Saturday after-  
 noon. The crew haircuts of Harvard undergraduates identified the  
 wearers as adequately as did their coonskin coats parked in the  
 cloakroom. The lights were low, so was much of the conversation,  
 and there was a bottle marked Gordon's under every table.



The Egyptian Room of the Brunswick was a North American collegiate hallmark, an academic arena for romping and stomping, one with Manhattan's Plaza Grill, the Club de Vingt, the Lorraine Grill and the Pre Cat. And Leo Reisman was king of the Egyptian Room. His band was celebrated before even a thin fellownamed Paul Whiteman began achieving a crescent vogue at the Palais Royal in Longacre Square, and to this day survivors of that lost and happy generation ... recall the glory that was the Egyptian Room when Mr. Reisman was playing "Shine on Harvest Moon".

During a performance at the Hotel Brunswick, Jerome Kern and Florenz Ziegfeld heard him, and suggested that he appear in the new Kern show, "Sally", and as a featured attraction in a Ziegfeld production on the Amsterdam Roof. However, Ziegfeld was not willing to meet his salary demands, and Kern, still convinced that he belonged in New York, turned him over to Charles Dillingham, who placed him in the Crystal Room of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. Kern also signed Reisman to appear on stage in his new show, "Good Morning Dearie."

In January 1921, Leo recorded two songs for Columbia - "Love Bird", and "Bright Eyes", released as record number A3366. They probably represent his first recordings. Leo insisted that he had recorded for Vocalian during 1919, but a printed advertisement prepared by that company announces "the premier releases of the Leo F. Reisman Orchestra; On May 1, 1922 - "Bygones", "Lonesome Hours"; and on June 1, 1922, "Idola".

Also, Leo claimed, during this time he fronted twenty-seven units, which played all over the New England area. For example, the BOSTON ENTERPRISE, announcing the Ninth Annual Elk's Ball, tells us that

the special attraction of the evening will be the appearance of the noted Reisman himself. He stands out today as one of the geniuses of the musical world. He is the sensation of Boston, where night after night he entertains large audiences at the Brunswick Hotel. He is a man that does not believe in mere racket and has been the leading figure in banishing jazz and other idiotic noises from the modern dancing music and starting it back on the road to harmony and melody. He is an artist not only for the financial end of it, but by a pure love of music, for its own sake. Mr. Reisman has had invitations to play with leading musical comedies of the country, but has preferred to remain in Boston, where he established a new precedent for dancing music, which was a swing back to normalcy, common sense, and true beauty.

During this time, THE LITERARY DIGEST commented, Two years ago, Mr. Reisman was called upon to put together a dance music organization for a Bostonian hotel. Jazz was then at its height and, aside from clarinets and trombones, the alleged instruments of a dance orchestra included such melody makers as cowbells, whistles, sleighbells, cocoa shells and even tin pans and wooden rattles. Mr. Reisman eliminated both clarinets and trombones and informed his trap drummer that he was to play only with the drums, while to the orchestra in general he issued the order that it was to play only the notes indicated by the score and that no interpolated effects would be permitted.

Re-reading this statement a few months before his death, Leo denied that he had ever eliminated "both clarinets and trumpets", and commented, "I merely didn't make a racket where a racket shouldn't be made."

Leo was now recording regularly for Columbia, had made his first radio broadcast, and, during 1924, appeared in vaudeville at B. F. Keith's in Boston. By that winter he was doing so well that he was able to turn down an invitation to appear for the entire season at Miami's exclusive Roney Plaza Hotel. He continued to play at private parties, and on December 19, 1924, THE BOSTON POST reported that

Leo F. Reisman, Boston's favorite syncopator, and his Hotel Brunswick Orchestra, will be paid \$3,000 to play from 10 o'clock on the night of January 2, to five in the morning of January 3. The occasion is a party to be given in Swickley, Pennsylvania, by James D. Rhodes, a prominent Pittsburgh millionaire, who will entertain at a cost of several hundred thousand dollars.

Phonograph records, by his own admission, were of secondary interest at the time, and he had difficulty remembering individual recording sessions and the personnel who recorded with him at specific sessions. An article by him, describing early electric recording, appeared in JACOB'S ORCHESTRA MONTHLY AND THE CADENZA in January 1927:

... My own experience with this new recording has been solely with the Columbia Phonograph Company, for which my orchestra makes dance records. The first one of these new records I heard when reproduced on one of the new Columbia machines, made especially to play these records, so astonished me with its faithfulness of reproduction that I have not yet recovered. The bass part, and the inner voices are reproduced with wonderful fidelity. Not only that, but the characteristic tone color of each instrument in the orchestra is retained to a surprising degree.

... In my opinion, the new electrical records will not displace the radio, but neither will the radio take the place of the reproducing machine to the extent that it formerly has. There is room enough in our modern life for both the radio and the talking machine and the ultimate result, I believe, will be that they will complement and supplement each other rather than compete with each other.

Early in 1928 he appeared as concert master in Symphony Hall, Boston, in a program called "Rhythms", a presentation of recent and standard compositions. The Columbia Phonograph Company was quick to exploit his concert for the purpose of increasing record sales, as indicated by the following article which appeared in MUSIC TRADES, on February 11, 1928:



\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* "George Gershwin and myself underneath a poster  
 \* advertising a concert of Gershwin music in Paris.  
 \* It was taken in Paris on a small street directly  
 \* of the Champs Elysee - Year uncertain"  
 \* - Leo Reisman  
 \*\*\*\*\*

## COLUMBIA DEALERS TIE UP WITH BOSTON JAZZ CONCERT

### SPECIAL WINDOW DISPLAYS AND ADVERTISING FEATURED IN CONNECTION WITH REISMAN CONCERT AT SYMPHONY HALL

Local Columbia phonograph and sheet music dealers are cooperating in one of the biggest campaigns to boost popular music in the history of the business in this territory, in connection with the forthcoming concert of modern jazz music, which Leo Reisman, exclusive Columbia recording artist, will give with his augmented orchestra of forty musicians at Symphony Hall, Sunday evening, February 19.

As part of the general advertising campaign, dealers in Greater Boston have turned over their show windows to an attractive trim, displaying a two-color cutout of Reisman flanked by one sheet posters in the same general color scheme, heralding the concert date. The display also includes recent Reisman record releases by Columbia, which he is including in his program, as well as published numbers.

Keen interest among radio and dance fans, as well as musicians is being shown in the concert, which is being heavily advertised throughout New England, a territory in which Leo Reisman and his Hotel Brunswick Orchestra has long been popular.

The personnel for this concert was made up mostly of regular members of the Reisman organization, including musicians who recorded with him. THE BILLBOARD, of February 4, 1928, tells us that "Leo Reisman is bringing Johnny Dunn, rated as one of the best negro hot trumpet players in New York, to Boston for his Symphony Hall concert with his augmented orchestra of forty musicians ... Dunn will be featured in two 'blues' specialties, 'Aunt Hagar's Children' and 'St. Louis Blues' "

Other personnel for this concert were:

violins - D. S. Elgart; W. H. Capron; S. Shklar; A. Harris; A. Leuci;  
 A. Nicoli; A. Levine; P. Shaw  
 violincellos - L. E. Dalbeck; K. Zeise  
 string bass - G. A. Gerhardt  
 flute - J. E. Furth  
 flute, oboe, English horn - P. Ortiano  
 bassoon - H. Piller  
 saxophones - Burt Williams; Jess Smith; William Traunstein; Nelson  
 Down; George Bamford; A. Swords.  
 trumpets - Louis Shaffrin; John Jacobson; Max Kruslee; Felix Catino;  
 S. Ilin  
 trombones - Ernie Gibbs; S. Guleslan; N. Sheer  
 piano - Raymond Pugh; Paul Luke  
 banjo - Ned Cola  
 percussion - Harry Sigman; Louis Weiner  
 celesta - Morris Galben

The concert also included the premier performance of "Clowns", a piece by Charles Martin Loeffler specially written for this concert and dedicated to Leo Reisman, and a performance of Rube Bloom's "Soliloquy" - "first time in Boston; Composer at Piano."

Of the concert, one critic reported:

### LEO REISMAN SCORES TRIUMPH IN RECITAL AT SYMPHONY HALL

All roads led to the realm of jazz at Symphony Hall last night. There, Leo Reisman, known as a capital conductor of dance orchestras, made a triumphant orchestral debut with a program rightly entitled "Rhythms". Three types of jazz it held; the real jazz of the river bottoms as exemplified by their past master, W. C. Handy; Broadway jazz as Gershwin, Kern, and Donaldson score it; "educated," or one might say "high-school" jazz from Ferdie Grofe, Rube Bloom, and last but not least, Loeffler.

Upon the stand, Mr. Reisman is a conductor par excellence. His technique is sound, his sense of form and the sweep of musical lines need not be questioned by the most meticulous. An orchestral conductor, he betters Mr. Whiteman, leaves the rest of his confreres far behind. The orchestra itself seemed a bit overheavy with brass, but it does boast a good pianist, Paul Luke.



\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* JOHNNY DUNN played Boston's Symphony Hall with \*  
 \* Leo Reisman's 40 piece orchestra  
 \*\*\*\*\*

Also during 1928, Leo filmed his first Vitaphones. An otherwise unidentified article of that year tells us that "aided by a 16-piece orchestra, Leo Reisman will enter the movies. He has been signed to do a short number for Vitaphone and next month will go with his orchestra to the Brooklyn, New York, studios to record. Reisman's programme has not been announced as yet, but it will include eight modern dance hits ... each hit to be allowed one minute." Leo recalled little about these films, and was unable to supply any information about the personnel involved.

During 1929, at the request of New York's Mayor Walker, Leo signed a contract to appear at the recently rebuilt Central Park Casino. His success was virtually instantaneous, and, within a short time, he achieved a degree of popularity enjoyed by most performers only in fantasy.

THE NEW YORKER printed the following item:

\* Now, as to this Central Park Casino. What that place has ever done to deserve a lovely little orchestra like Leo Reisman's beats me, with the world full of fine, hardworking, conscientious restaurants like Alice Foote MacDougall's that really rate a man like him. In an age chock full of very good dance orchestras, he wows the world. Besides all of this, deaf mutes could watch the cuckoo piano player (Eddie Duchin-ed.) and the somewhat moonstruck Mr. Reisman himself and call it a rich evening's entertainment. Oh, for the pen of a Bolitho to eulogize that man! For his sake, I would even battle the moving-picture idea of deluxe service that prevails at the Casino at dinnertime; I would wait an hour for oysters and then get clams; but fortunately it is not necessary. For after the theatre is the time to drop into the Casino and dance in peace, if you are consulting me.

\* THIS WAS IN CENTRAL PARK,  
 AND NOT THE PARK CENTRAL HOTEL  
 (NOW PLAZA?)



Said Walter Winchell, "If you like to dress up and put on the ritz then the Casino in Central Park is right up your alley. Very snooty but excellent cuisine and the best dance orchestra in town. Leo Reisman's".

And, in THE NEW YORKER, "Lipstick" wrote:

... Thence we dashed forth to the Central Park Casino, which is a lovely spot in the summer, and there were Dave Fitzgibbon and Jean Barry from "Wake Up and Dream", who do a swell fast dance, full of trick turns and hurling about of the lady, and a grand tango. Tina Meller was also performing the night I attended, doing set-teeth Spanish numbers. But the real reason for going there is still the fact that Leo Reisman's orchestra is what it is. I want the piano player for Christmas. I want Leo Reisman for my next birthday. Daddy, buy me one of those.

THE BOSTON POST published, on August 20, 1929, a coherent analysis of what had happened:

Dallying in Boston for a decade with his orchestra while he passed up innumerable New York offers has resulted in Leo Reisman obtaining the most coveted contract in New York. He has just signed his name to a \$60,000 a year contract with the new owners of the Central Park Casino, at the moment the deluxe dancing rendezvous of the smart set.

It seems that Leo Reisman has arrived in New York at the psychological moment. If he had gone five years ago as he had been advised, he would have missed his great opportunity. He arrives at a time when New York is sated. The best of the known orchestras are now old stories. Paul Whiteman, of course, draws a crowd at the St. Regis Roof, but his audiences know what to expect. George Olsen's flair has been repeated in too many musical shows. And, even Ted Lewis is no longer a seventh wonder.

Leo Reisman is a new, a bright new sensation. And New York likes things and specially when they are different. Reisman is different. His is a musical band. He conducts with the same ardor and love as a symphonic leader. He insists on musical effects. Jaded New York has not heard such a band. It is a far cry from such musical effects as, for an example, Waring's Pennsylvanians produced by playing on a dozen frying pans with forks.

As a transitory novelty for an evening, it was fun. But, for a steady diet of "musical humor", specially in hot weather, the most blase of New Yorkers began to hunger for a bit of rhythm and soft, seductive melodies for their jazzing feet. Beautiful music, individually interpreted and spirited, has a lasting effect. People seem to want more of it. That is the answer to Reisman's vogue at the Central Park Casino.

About this time, Leo left the Columbia Phonograph Company for the Victor Talking Machine Company. In addition, he broadcast sustaining programs from the Casino, and appeared as featured conductor on the Radio Keith-Orpheum Hour, a showcase for the currently popular vaudeville and motion picture artists.

The following winter, he was engaged by Borros Morros to appear at New York's Paramount Theatre, in conjunction with the current film presentation. Morros, at the time artistic director of the theatre, had just lost Rudy Valley to the RKO chain. The 3B-piece pit orchestra was then playing 2-1/2 minute overtures under the direction of Rubinoff, and Reisman reorganized the production, incorporating the orchestra into 18 to 20 minute stage productions. As a special feature, Leo hired Johnny Green, then a young composer, to play, as soloist in an elaborately orchestrated production number, his own composition -- "Body and Soul".

Another part of the show was devoted to an equally elaborate arrangement of "What Is This Thing Called Love", the high-point of which was a trumpet solo by Bubber Miley. During 1930 it would have been considered dubious taste - certainly in a theatre with the prestige and reputation of the New York Paramount - to permit a Negro musician to play with a white band. After the number had started, Miley would appear at the back of the theatre, dressed as an usher, and playing his trumpet. He would come down the aisle and join the performance in the audience in front of the raised platform. Leo remembers this bit of theatrical nonsense and Miley's solo as the high-point of the show.

The year 1931 brought with it interest in the music and dances of Cuba. The tango had been introduced successfully to the United States two decades earlier, but little additional interest in Latin-American music had been shown since. Leo Reisman's role in exposing the American public to the rumba is explained by this article which appeared in TIME magazine, on February 23, 1931:

"The Peanut Vendor" (El Manisero), with its hot, catchy rhythm between a jig and tango, has started an invasion. Don Azpiazu's Havana Orchestra brought the song north last year, played it with other Cuban tunes at RKO's Palace Theatre in Manhattan, afterwards at the smart Central Park Casino. Then Don Azpiazu went back to Cuba to entertain U. S. tourists. He left his tunes behind. Manhattan's Leo Reisman learned to lead them. Reisman's drummer mastered the four complicated beats which Cuban orchestras emphasize with the bongo (a double-headed drum held between the knees and played by the fingers of both hands), the claves (two sticks of a rare Cuban wood, which make a clicking sound when struck together) and the maracas (gourds filled with seeds which make a swishing sound). Vincent Lopez took up Cuban things and so did other jazzmen.

Last week, while music publishers were haggling over Cuban copyrights, leader Reisman returned from Havana with another sheaf of Cuban scores. In Havana he had a rest from "The Peanut Vendor", which is seldom played there. But he heard many times "Ay Mama Inez", "Te Odio" (I Hate You), "Me Odias" (You Hate Me).

He went into Cuba's interior and studied the primitive rumba dance, a series of writhings and twistings too lewd for fastidious eyes. The modified version of the rumba, the danzon, is the craze of Havana, a potential craze in the U. S. It has easy, lazy steps and, in its authentic form, an interim of a minute or so when the tempo changes and dancers stop for conversation or for the lady to sway her fan.

Leo also began a radio series called "Pond's Studio Tea". On June 1931, THE DETROIT NEWS announced:

#### NEW CROONER MAKES DEBUT IN PROGRAM WITH REISMAN

The composer of a tuneful Broadway production and a youthful feminine vocalist, making her debut to the large network radio audiences, will be featured Friday, June 19, at 8:30 P.M. over the red network of NBC.

Harold Arlen, who composed "You Said It", the current Lou Holtz vehicle on Broadway, has two numbers on this program. Arlen also wrote "Hitting the Bottle", one of the most captivating tunes from Earl Carroll's "Vanities".

Miss Lee Wiley, an American girl whose vocal abilities have brought her quickly to the attention of radio talent seekers, will be heard in a rendition of "Georgia", by Hoagy Carmichael. (sic)

Lee Wiley (or Minnie Lee Wiley, according to her home-town newspaper) was known as a "crooner", a term which apparently had not yet been defined as applicable to male vocalists only. On July 15, the NEW BEDFORD MASSACHUSETTS MERCURY wrote that:

Radio has once more opened its portals to beauty--- this time from Oklahoma. She's pretty 21-year old Lee Wiley, contralto crooner, whose rich, southern voice permeated the ether waves during the Leo Reisman orchestra periods as an exclusive artist.

Born to cultured and musical parents at Tulsa, where she received careful training by her mother, singer and teacher, Miss Wiley naturally became a popular soprano.

Later during her undergraduate days at Oklahoma University she divided her time between her books and putting in appearances before the microphone. Her persistent effort to get somewhere with her singing soon brought her a job in the studios.

... A movie career was cut short by a long illness. She was doubling vocally for Esther Ralston and Josephine Dunne, screen stars, when she was offered a handsome movie contract, but had to pass it up when she became ill.



\*\*\*\*\*  
HAROLD ARLEN    LEE WILEY    LEO REISMAN  
\*\*\*\*\*

As the WASHINGTON D.C. HERALD put it, "That contralto with Leo Reisman's Orchestra ... is one of the best. And her rendition of "Take It From Me" last night was what we intelligentsia would refer to as "hot stuff".

In the field of recording, Leo's prestige continued to rise. Victor permitted him to cover the best show-tunes available, and, as much as possible, to have his way about choosing vocalists. He was frequently unhappy with those made available to him by the studios, believing that while many may have been competent church soloists, their voices and techniques were not suited to the singing of popular songs. Leo preferred to draw on the talent of the performers who were appearing in the shows from which the songs he recorded were taken. There - fore, during 1931, newspapers advertised

"I Love Louisa" - the song hit from the smashingly successful revue "Band Wagon"  
sung by FRED ASTAIRE  
played by LEO REISMAN

Once you hear this catchy record, you'll be whistling and singing the tune morning, noon, and night. Everybody will be crazy about it ... a rollicking, boisterous, side-splitting song ... sung with gusto by Fred Astaire. Get yours ahead of the crowd. Your dealer will play it for you.

Also during 1931, Victor introduced their first commercially produced long-playing record. On October 2, a newspaper reported that the first 15-minute Victor record will be Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony" complete ... A popular number, the entire score of "The Band Wagon" by Leo Reisman's Orchestra, will be the second disc. First releases are slotted for around October 17.

Leo's "Band Wagon" recording represents perhaps the first long-playing original cast recording from a Broadway musical show, because it features both Fred and Adele Astaire of the original cast.

1931 represented a successful year for Leo, but it was a bad year for the phonograph industry in general. On December 29, VARIETY printed the following item:

#### 1931's SHELLACKED PANCAKE LEADERS

Radio provided most of the new leaders - 15-cent records flopped and 15-minute records started as the year ended - there was another 10% average drop in disc sales - hits grossing 75,000 were considered good - handful bettered that - machines sold slowly

everywhere - Columbia led in the number of sidelines manufactured - cutting discs for radio broadcasting continued to provide gravy - Brunswick went down in prestige as its deficit went up - Warners scrambled ...

... Russ Columbo, Frank Crumit, Guy Lombardo, Paul Whiteman, Ben Bernie, Earl Burnett, Jacques Renard, Bing Crosby, Boswell Sisters, Rudy Vallee, Leo Reisman, Wayne King, Ted Weems are just a few of the names included as disc leaders who are also conspicuous in radio. No doubt about the varied and multiple influence of the ether upon the wax. They touch at a dozen points.

List of those once big on discs, but now fading could be amplified endlessly. There still remains an in-between class.

The years 1932 and 1933 were devoted to work in recording and radio. (He had been replaced at the Central Park Casino by one of his popular pianists -- Eddie Duchin). Eleanor Roosevelt appeared on his program during the fall of 1932, delivering a series of nine-minute speeches on such topics as "Career and Home", "A Mother's Role When Sons and Daughters Marry", "A Mother's Responsibility as a Citizen", and "Official and Social Life in Washington". Observing the situation first-hand, THE PITTSBURGH PRESS reported,

#### FEARLESS FIRST LADY-ELECT DOES HER BROADCAST LIKE A VETERAN

It was almost broadcasting time Friday night. Leo Reisman's orchestra warmed up on the stage of NBC's Times Square studio. But Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, sitting at a small desk on the same stage, didn't seem to mind the tumult of instruments. She was rehearsing her radio address, reading it into the two deaf microphones which would soon carry her voice into the homes of the nation.

Louis Howe, the silent man of the Roosevelt advisory board, sat in the darkened wings and scanned the script. Lee Wiley, the handsome torch singer, wandered aimlessly back-stage gravely intoning the lyrics of a new song.

Miss Wiley suddenly walked on the stage. The lights made her black hair gleam, and her eyebrows were thin and arched in continuous surprise. Mrs. Roosevelt glanced up. The torch singer and the future first lady of the land shook hands. They chatted for a moment.

"Don't get messy with those cornets!", warned Reisman. "Remember, you're not individualists."

Mrs. Roosevelt watched the band boss for a moment, and then went back to her script. The announcer signalled that they were on the air. The red curtain went up. The glass curtain came down. The audience applauded. The orchestra slipped into a stealthy melody. Lee Wiley sang her solo in a casually cold voice, full of a strange heartbreaking aloofness. The band boomed another number. And then Mrs. Roosevelt began to talk.

Miss Wiley watched from the wings. Reisman stood on his platform and stared at the musician. Some polished their instruments. Others watched the audience beyond the glass curtain. Some closed their eyes as if the spotlight bothered them. Mrs. Roosevelt bowed, and left the auditorium as soon as she had completed her talk. The band played another number.

On Victor records, Leo continued to exploit the idea of making "original cast" recordings from Broadway shows. In December 1932, RADIO RETAILING reported,

We dropped into the local Victor studios the other day and found Leo Reisman hard at work making some more show hit numbers. This well known musician is now in charge of all Broadway show hit recordings; he is putting additional appeal in these recordings by having the featured performers in the shows offer their authentic bit before the new velocity microphones.

Fred Astaire was on hand singing, in the making of two future hits from "The Gay Divorce", which will have opened in New York by the time you read this. "I've Got You On My Mind" and "Night and Day" are the titles of the Cole Porter pieces, played by Reisman and his band with Astaire vocalizing just as he does in the show.

Ⓟ This turned out to be 1 up 78 sides on Victor 22755 recorded 6/30/31. "I Love Louisa" - now seen on the show! Ⓢ He did "The Cat and the Hat" on LP 11-16005 on 12/28/31



Three months later, the disc of "Night and Day" was listed by VARIETY as the best selling record in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and the same publication observed that the "disc sale of Leo Reisman's version of 'Night and Day' had already reached 48,000, a new high for the Victor catalog over a period of almost two years. On the strength of this, Victor has put on the market a concert arrangement of the same number by Whiteman. Significance of the Reisman platter sales is that dance recordings on the Victor list have been ranging between 8,000 and 12,000."

In May 1933, Leo participated in Victor's experiment with picture records. These recordings, similar to the picture records of the 1940s, had images pressed into the base of the records, the surface of the pictures covered with a transparent lamination containing the grooves. The tunes were "Adorable" and "My Heart's Desire", from the motion picture, "Adorable". On May 20, THE NEW YORK SUN announced,

So popular are the "Adorable" songs that special dance records played by Leo Reisman's orchestra and rushed to New York's distributors this week are now on sale. Photographs of Janet Gaynor and Henry Garat are superimposed on the base of the record, the first time there has been such a direct tie up with a motion picture.

On July 21, 1933, readers of the COLUMBUS DISPATCH were advised that "for those who are equipped to use the long-playing records on their talking machines, there is a new Victor: dance selections from 'The Gold Diggers of 1933', with Leo Reisman and his orchestra playing 'The Gold Diggers Song', and Don Bestor's orchestra offering the incomparable 'Shadow Waltz'". The following month, VARIETY noted that "in the mechanical camp Bing Crosby took three out of Brunswick's first six, Ted Lewis found 'Lazy Bones' an aid to topping the Columbia list, while Leo Reisman's version of 'Stormy Weather' gave him ace rating with Victor".

During May 1933, Leo withdrew from the Pond's program for personal reasons, and left Lee Wiley behind. He now involved himself in two different programs - one for Borden's (vocalist - Vivien Ruth), the other for Philip Morris (vocalists - Phil Huey and Sally Singer).

In October 1933, he signed a contract with Brunswick records, with whom he was to record for the next four years.

Also that fall, he was preparing for and eagerly anticipating a tour organized by George Gershwin, featuring a thirty-five piece orchestra, Gershwin as piano soloist, and James Melton as featured tenor. Arrangements had been made for Sally Singer and Phil Huey to continue as vocalists on the Philip Morris program, and for Jesse Smith, Reisman's arranger, to take over the conducting chores. Unfortunately, Leo broke his hip and spent a good part of that winter in the hospital. However, the touring orchestra, the direction of which had been turned over to Charles Previn, routed as "The Reisman Symphony Orchestra".

Early during 1934, Leo returned to the Central Park Casino. Said THE NEW YORKER:

No matter how romping your nature, there is always a time when you must have a suitable background for your newest Molyneux triumph in evening gowns. The Central Park Casino has Leo Reisman's orchestra back under its wing (Duchin is at present giving the sticks a treat) just to appease clamoring people who think it selfish of Leo to entertain thousands over the radio and forget his dancing addicts.

The Central Park Casino, however, was a product of a time during which New York City was controlled by an administration no longer in power, and it had, to those currently in office, ended its days of usefulness. On March 16, 1936, in preparation for its demolition, the lavish interiors of the Casino were sold at a public auction. THE NEW YORK EVENING POST reported the proceedings:

Instead of the titillating strains from the fiddies of Eddy Duchin's or Leo Reisman's jazzmen, the insistent sng-song voice of an auctioneer resounded today through the dusty, fly-blown rooms of the once splendiferous Central Park Casino.

"How much am I bid for this kitchen sink? One dollar? And a quarter. And a half. Two dollars. Two dollars ... going, going. And Edward H. Barrett, auctioneer for the Underwriters' Salvage Company, knocked down the sink for \$2.00. And thus the victory of Park Commissioner Moses, aided by time and circumstances became complete. ... Where debutantes and men-about-town once

danced and drank, Mr. Moses, who has fought the Casino since he assumed office, contending that resorts of its type have no place in a public park, will open a children's playground.

... Included in the sale are the very walls, decorated by the late Joseph Urban at a cost of \$10,000, and the crystal ceiling, which stood the corporation \$5,000. The dance floor, laid at an expense of \$1,000, also was among the lots, but it was withdrawn from sale when it was found that it could not yield more than about \$100 and that the expense of taking it up would come to at least \$125.

Bargains were plentiful. The entire contents of a ladies' retiring room - dressing table, mirrors, drapes, linoleum floor covering - went for \$4.00.

A tapestry-covered settee with two chaises to match brought \$20. Silver-plated salad bowls and soup tureens were knocked down for fifty, sixty, and seventy-five cents apiece.

The Central Park Casino was gone, and the music to which people danced was considerably different from the music Leo had played ten and fifteen years earlier at The Hotel Brunswick. The public's image of him was changing. The SPRINGFIELD MASSACHUSETTS EVENING UNION on July 8, 1936, wrote:

With Crime Clues off the air, at least for the summer, the early part of our Tuesday session was a disappointing affair. We dodged here and there for a substitute and finally settled on Leo Reisman's orchestra, which we never hear without images of a bushy-haired temperamental leader. Reisman now ranks as a real old-timer. His climb to national prominence had its beginnings in the days when WBZA and WBZ and the Hotel Brunswick was but a home for a studio. It, the climb, has been steady and for more than a year Reisman has been holding down one spot. His work is excellent without being spectacular.

During the fall of 1936, the Waldorf's Sert Room signed Leo. "The Sert Room at the Waldorf Astoria", wrote Russell Crouse in the February 1937 issue of THE STAGE,

is famous for its music, but its morals are just as good, for it is simply bursting with dignity. Leo Reisman presides and his orchestra is one of the very best. Mr. Reisman looks like a college professor. One of the things I must find out some day is why so many orchestra leaders look like college professors when it would be so much more fun the other way around. ... (Eve Symington). ... I'm told, is very Park Avenue, and she sings as though she is afraid someone from Madison Avenue might hear her, but she is extremely entertaining in a quiet way, as are Mario and Flora, who dance.



\*\*\*\*\*  
FRANCIS MADER AND LEO REISMAN - MIAMI BEACH FLORIDA (1934)  
\*\*\*\*\*

Leo's association with Philip Morris had ended, and he began a new series called "The Nine O'Clock Revue", under the sponsorship of the F & M Schaefer Brewing Company, and with supporting personnel including singers Ray Heatherton and Eve Symington, a vocal trio called The Three Symphonettes, and announcer Fred Uttal. RADIO DAILY, reviewing this new series on February 9, 1937, reported a

SMOOTH, PLEASING MUSICAL, WITH BEER COPY DISCREETLY HANDLED

... Show is a well balanced entertainment of the usual rhythmic Reisman tunes, interspersed with ballads by Heatherton and a few spots filled here and there by the Three Symphonettes. Uttal and Miss Symington filled in considerable continuity and lead-ins for songs under the guise of imaginary trips to various theaters or night clubs about town. These interludes helped as cues for the orchestra to great extent and added a somewhat different touch. Miss Symington handled her lines nicely and Uttal proved no slouch either. Former also contributed a couple of vocal numbers.

That summer, Leo sailed to Europe, by invitation of the French government, to play at the Paris International Exposition. The reaction of Parisians is perhaps summed up by a statement which appeared in LE FIGARO on July 14: "Leo Reisman est incontestablement le roi de la musique a danser."

And on July 28, 1937, VARIETY reported:  
LEO REISMAN PLAYS FROM STEPS OF OPERA  
IN BIGGEST PARIS HOOPLA

Despite a waiters' strike and an unpleasant atmosphere, Paris turned out this year to celebrate July 14 -- the French equivalent of July 4 at home -- as it has never been done before.

... Most extraordinary event of the day probably, from an American standpoint, was the band of Leo Reisman playing "St. Louis Blues" and other pop dance offerings on the steps of the Opera. French laughed at the comparison of hot American jazz bursting forth from the steps of the home of all that highbrow music means here, danced to the music in the streets and the boys had a hard time getting away after playing for half an hour.

Leo returned to the United States that fall, re-hiring Ray Heatherton for the continuing Schaeffer series, and adding a vocal group called "The Musical Mystics", led by Ed Smalle of "Revelers" fame. In addition, he appeared as guest conductor on the famous "Hit Parade" series, to the satisfaction of, among others, the critic of RADIO DAILY who stated, on October 21,

With Leo Reisman as guest baton-wielder, Wednesday's night, "Your Hit Parade" on WEA-F-NBC Red network was an exceptionally tuneful and smooth-flowing hour of musical entertainment. From "That Old Feeling" of current popularity, down through a rumba and all the way back to the perennial "St. Louis Blues", Reisman led the parade in expert musicianly fashion. His arrangements, while distinctive enough, hewed close to the basic melody in each respective case. Vocalists of the evening were Lois Bennett, Stuart Allen, Freddie Gibson, and the Songsmith Quartet, with Basil Ruysdael as the announcer.

In October 1937, Leo left Brunswick and returned to Victor, with whom he remained until 1942. As a result of the new Victor contract, Reisman continued to produce mostly show tunes, from such productions as "I'd Rather Be Right", "Rosalie", "I Married An Angel", "Louisiana Purchase", and "Lady in the Dark". However, show-tunes were apparently not as popular as they had been during earlier years, and dance records which sold best during those years featured a type of music which had been given the timid appellation, "swing". Reisman was capable of adapting to current musical fads, but only to a limited degree. And so, in 1938, LIBERTY magazine invited Leo to write an article for them, titled "Why I Don't Play Swing". Wrote Leo,

I don't like skeletons. I know that the skeleton is essential to the human body, but there is no life unless warm glowing flesh with blood flowing through its veins is molded on the bones. Rhythm is to music what the skeleton is to the body. It is essential. But music is achieved only when flowing melody is superimposed upon the rhythmic structure ...

At the Waldorf, I seldom play swing. Such a procedure would be out of keeping with its suave and sophisticated atmosphere. Besides, in a well-balanced program, as in good cooking, discriminate seasoning is an indication of superior taste. A little garlic goes a long way! When I do play swing, I use a tune that is appropriate, and I use a carefully orchestrated and rehearsed arrangement. I do not want to subject my listeners to the trial and error method.

Furthermore, when I play swing I am careful of two things -- the rhythm must not rattle its bones, and the melodic line must not be broken. To those who are now saying, "Swings the Thing", I'd like to reply, "No, sing's the thing." And to those who would like to know how to differentiate between good swing and bad swing, I suggest this simple yardstick: "If you can sing the swing, it's music."

He travelled to California in the summer of 1938, playing his first public engagement of his career west of the Mississippi, at the Ambassador's Coconut Grove. That fall, he returned East, appearing on "The Hit Parade" series (with vocalists Lanny Ross and Fredda Gibson, and the Raymond Scott Quintet), and, in January 1939, filled an engagement at New York's Strand Theatre.

Of this appearance at the Strand, THE NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE reported,

Although Mr. Reisman is not listed among the swing masters, he provides a welcome change from the brassy rhythms of orchestras keyed to the jitterbug trade. He keeps all the instruments under control in offering a pleasant medley of popular tunes.

BILLBOARD noted:  
Show this week is light on box-office pulling power, but, as usually happens with a bill that doesn't shape up too well on paper, the entertainment actually offers a lot more than star-studded fiascos. Band of the week is Leo Reisman, the only name value of the fifty-two minute show. And in comparison with jitterbug delights like Goodman, Dorsey and Co., his drawing power is negligible.

His brand of music, however, needs no excuses. Jumping from "One O'Clock Jump" to "My Reverie", and taking in St. Louis Blues" and "Hurry Home", Reisman proved that he has lost none of the excellent musicianship framed in superlative arrangements that made his band one of the top-notch outfits some years ago when he reigned at the erstwhile Central Park Casino.

Highlights are the string obligato on "My Reverie", the fiddle and growl trumpet orchestration for the W. C. Handy classic, and Larry Stewart's and Dinah Shaw's (sic) vocalizing. Tenor did the Debussy-Clinton opus, with Miss Shaw handling "Hurry Home" just right. Seventeen men look good in white tux jackets against a simple blue backdrop, and all in all Reisman acquits himself more than creditably.

In November 1941, Reisman was invited to Guatemala to play at the International Pavilion on the opening day of the Guatemala Fair and at the President's Ball in Guatemala City. "The Guatemalan government", noted VARIETY, "is paying somewhere between \$15,000 - \$18,000 in transportation, living expenses and salaries for the band's trip and it will play only that one date."

In 1942, Leo signed a contract to record with Decca, with whom he cut his last sides about five years later.

1943 brought a return to the Waldorf-Astoria, the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE reporting,

Two veterans of those halcyon Central Park Casino days, when dapper Jimmy Walker was in stride and New Yorkers in general were living high, share honors these nights at the Starlight Roof of the Waldorf-Astoria. Leo Reisman and his orchestra and Morton Downey, the tenor, found no difficulty in forcing silence from those earlier audiences or jaded sophisticates and celebrities. No more do they find their command missing at the Waldorf.

At the Starlight Roof, Mr. Reisman is in a happy environment of elegant gaiety. To the lightsome melodies that he plays he imparts the intense personality of his classical training and his technical and pyrotechnical diversity. Never has a more passionate mane of dark hair than Mr. Reisman's been tossed so feverishly at



REISMAN PARADE OF BANDS



.....  
JIM CURLEY (THE LAST MURRAH) MAYOR OF BOSTON AND LEO REISMAN AND HIS ORCHESTRA IN FRONT OF THE CITY HALL, BOSTON, ON THE  
OCCASION OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE COMPOSITION OF A CHILD PRODIGY COMPOSER FOR THE MAYOR (EARLY 20s)  
.....



.....  
front: (1 to r) WALTER POOLE, JOHN JACOBSON, HERMAN BRENNER, "THE COUNT", ALLAN LANG, FELIX GREENBERG, ANDREW JACOBSON  
rear: (1 to r) JOSEPH TRONSTEIN, HARRY SIGMAN, RAYMOND PUGH. (1925-1926)  
.....

REISMAN PARADE OF BANDS



.....  
front: (1 to r) ERNIE GIBBS, LOUIS SHAFRAN, NED COLA, LEW CONRAD, BURT WILLIAMS, ANDREW QUERZE, BILL TRONSTEIN  
rear: (1 to r) HARRY ATLAS, HARRY SIGMAN, RAYMOND PUGH - HOTEL BRUNSWICK, (c. 1928)  
.....



.....  
LEO REISMAN SYMPHONIC ORCHESTRA - SYMPHONY HALL, BOSTON MASS. (1928)  
.....







[illegible]

BRADFORD HOTEL, BOSTON MASS. (1932 or 1933) - Unidentified Personnel except for RAYMOND PUGH, SAMMY SCHKLAR, BURT WILLIAMS, LEW CONRAD



foreground: (1 to r) DON TRIDDER, JOE PARETTA, CARL PRAGER, LEW CONRAD, EDDIE PATROWICZ, ERNIE GIBBS  
 rear: (1 to r) SAMUEL LINER, HERMAN FINK, AL KUNZE - CASINO, CENTRAL PARK(NYC) (1934)



# REISMAN PARADE OF BANDS



.....  
**WALDORF ROOF (NYC) (SUMMER 1936-1937) - (Unidentified Personnel)**  
 .....



.....  
 front: (l to r) **LEO KAHN, SAMMY SILIN, PETROWICZ, ?**,  
**ERNIE GIBBS, NED COLA, BOB RAPEE, CARL PRAGER, JOHNNY HELPER,**  
 piano: **SAMUEL LINER** - other rear members unidentified -  
**COCONUT GROVE, AMBASSADOR HOTEL, LOS ANGELES, CALIF. (SUMMER 1938)**  
 .....



.....  
**MOVIE SHORT - WARNER BROS. (1941)**  
 .....

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